

Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee

Minutes of the Meeting of the Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held in the Council Chamber, Headquarters, Inverness on 12 March 2026 at 10.30am.

Present:

Highland Council

Mr David Fraser (Chair)
Mr Raymond Bremner
Mr Derek Brown
Mr Alasdair Christie
Ms Fiona Duncan
Mr Ian Kyle
Ms Fiona Malcolm
Mr Paul Oldham
Mr Brian Porter

NHS Highland

Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop (Vice Chair)
Ms Louise Bussell
Ms Heledd Cooper
Ms Fiona Davies
Ms Jennifer Davies
Ms Arlene Johnstone
Ms Karen Leach (sub for Mr Anderson)
Mr Gerry O'Brien
Dr Paul Treon
Dr Neil Wright

Staff Representatives

Ms Samantha Purdie (Highland Council)
Mr Gavin Smith (NHS Highland)

Third Sector, Carer and Service User Representatives

Mr Christopher Allan (Scottish Care Highland Branch Chair – Care Homes)
Mr Ian McNamara (Highland Senior Citizen's Network)
Ms Gaener Rodger (Inspiring Young Voices)

Officers Present

Mr D Park, Depute Chief Executive, NHS Highland
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Highland Council
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Highland Council

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan

Mr A Anderson, Ms R Connolly, Ms K Lackie, and Ms M Wylie.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were none.

3. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **APPROVED** minutes of the meeting of the Joint Monitoring Committee held on 4 December 2025.

4. Transitions Audit Sgrùdadh Eadar-ghluasadan

There was circulated Report No JMC/01/26 by the Chief Officer Integrated People Services (THC), the Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer Health and Social Care (THC), and the Chief Officer (NHS).

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the importance of the transition period in a young person's life was emphasised. While there were areas of improvement highlighted by the audits, the joint work being undertaken and the focus on young people was encouraging;
- a workshop was proposed to further consider the findings of the audit and best practice for the future. It was suggested that people with lived experience of the transition process could be invited. Attention was drawn to the experiences of, and the support provided to, the carers and families of the young people going through transition, as well as to funding arrangements;
- the relatively small number of people (ten) studied for the audits, was queried by several members, and it was explained that this had been the recommended sample size. The Chief Officer Integrated People Services offered to provide information outwith the Committee on the number of young people currently on the Transition Team radar;
- with regard to geographic implications, the need to use the audit recommendations to drive improvement across wider geographic areas was emphasised, as was the need to capture lived experience and use it to shape improvement. A summary was provided of some of the practices in place to work across different geographical areas;
- while the audit focused on the processes and systems in place for transitions, it was also important to consider the human side, including the additional support needs of young people who lacked parental support;
- attention was drawn to the engagement at national level being undertaken with regard to managing transitions, and to the importance of not only considering the outcomes from the audits but to look at the quality of the young people's experiences and cultural leadership across services. It was helpful to think of services being required to wrap around children and young people, rather than children and young people moving through services;
- assurance was sought and provided in relation to the achievement of target dates for actions detailed in the report;
- the linkage with SDS Option 1 was welcomed and innovative examples of the process to share information with families facing uncertainty would be beneficial;
- information and clarity were sought and provided on the position of the transitions process on the risk register, with this to be further considered at the workshop; and
- challenges around the cost escalation process in relation to transitions were being worked on.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the audit reports and the implications for the future provision of service across Highland Council and NHS Highland, and **AGREED** a workshop be held to further consider the issues raised and their implications for the future.

5. Models of Integration Steering Group Verbal Update **Cunntas Beòil Buidheann Stiùiridh nam Modailean Amalachaidh**

A verbal update was provided and **NOTED** as follows:

The Steering Group had considered the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Models of Integration Review on 16 January 2026, and elements of Phase 2 on 23 February 2026, with a focus on the engagement and communications plan. The next step was for the draft reports and recommendations to go to the Council and the NHS Highland Board in late March 2026. This would be following by an engagement process, and the aim of a final recommendation by September 2026. A more comprehensive report would be provided to the JMC after the March 2026 governance cycle. Attention was drawn to the need to involve the third sector, and this would form part of the planned engagement process.

6. Chief Officer's Report Adult Services **Aithisg Àrd-Oifigeir mu Sheirbheisean Inbheach**

There was circulated Report No JMC/02/26 by the Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- reference was made to the District Planning Group (DPG) reporting variations, the needs of different communities, and the process for the DPGs to feed into the Strategic Planning Group (SPG). Work was underway to improve how information was fed downwards from the SPG to the DPGs;
- it was highlighted that while the partnership was performing well against many metrics, it was an outlier in relation to Delayed Discharges, and a summary was provided of work being undertaken to test assumptions in this area, including holding conversations about leadership and capacity. A discharge without delay action plan was in progress and an interface manager was working to improve the situation;
- information was sought and provided on how the population health framework was being taken forward through both the Council and NHS Highland, and with input from the Community Planning Partnership as the broader determinants of health were being considered. Reference was also made to the Council's establishment of a poverty commission, which would tackle issues relevant to the JMC; and
- the importance of working together to avoid duplication and to identify gaps was emphasised.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the work undertaken in implementing the HHSCP Joint Strategic Plan and assurance performance information as supplied.

7. Integrated Children's Service Update **Aithisg Bhliadhnail Plana nan Seirbheisean Cloinne Amalaichte**

There was circulated Report No JMC/03/26 by the Chair of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Board.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was welcome that The Promise was becoming increasingly embedded in day to day operations and embraced by all;

- the strategic needs assessment was a powerful evidence-based tool that would help to develop and improve services. The inclusion of the voices of children and young people in the report was welcomed;
- it was queried whether any significant changes were anticipated for the new Children's Plan post-2026 and what the implications for the third sector might be. Reference was made to the population health framework being considered by the Community Planning Partnership and the impact of intelligence gathering on the strategic needs assessment, with an aim to align priorities to ensure focus for collective change;
- in relation to the measures for poverty, attention was drawn to the impact of expenditure, for example in rural areas, versus an income-based measure;
- with regard to the value of linking data sets, attention was drawn to challenges around the uptake of free school meals not being in proportion to the levels of child poverty, and to challenges in relation to vaccination uptake, with both of these issues being considered ahead of the next iteration of the Plan; and
- the importance of providing support to young carers and their right to a young carer plan was reiterated.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- work undertaken by the children's services planning partnership in delivering the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026; and
- work of the delivery groups.

8. Highland Health & Social Care Partnership Finance Reports Aithisg Ionmhais Com-pàirteachas Slàinte & Cùraim Shòisealta na Gàidhealtachd

The Committee **NOTED** that the Chair and Vice Chair had written to the Chief Executives of the Highland Council and NHS Highland with regard to the financial situation, and that the responses were being worked through and would help to shape future JMC agendas.

a. Highland Health & Social Care Partnership Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Com-pàirteachas Slàinte & Cùraim Shòisealta na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No JMC/04/26 by the Director of Finance, NHS Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position at Month 9 2025/2026 (December 2025).

b. Highland Council Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No JMC/05/26 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- forecast financial position for the year as set out in the report and appendices;
- explanations provided for any material variances and actions being taken or proposed; and

- iii. information set out regarding budget decisions made by Highland Council on 5 March 2026.

Closing Remarks

The Chair drew attention to April 2026 being National Autism Acceptance Month, which would be marked by the Council and NHS Highland.

The meeting ended at 11.55am



Highland VAW Partnership Meeting

16TH FEBRUARY 2026

PRESENT:

Peter MacKenzie – Independent Chair HVAWP
Adele Newlands, RWA
Anna Johnston Police Scotland
Catherine Russell, HVAWP
Cathy Steer, Public Health
Donna Munro, The Highland Council
Fiona MacIntosh, Early Protective Messaging Project
Fiona Wilson, HVAWP
Gavin Letford, COPFS
Gillian Hossack, CASWA
Jack Libby, The Highland Council
Karen Peteranna, HVAWP
Koreen MacDougall The Highland Council
Leanne Maxwell, IWA
Lorraine Revitt, Lochaber Women's Aid
Margaret Ross, The Highland Council
Maria Cano, JSW
Myra Ross, Public Health
Rebecca Neil, CJSW (only part of the meeting)
Romy Rehfield, RASASH

APOLOGIES:

Elaine Lyall, HVAWP
Isla Barton, NHSH
Lisa Harvey, The Highland Council
Mhairi MacDonald, NHSH
Mike Mawby, Safe & Together
Molly Gilbert, Adult Protection
James Martin, HLH
Susan Birse, NHSH
Ciaran Melens, Fire Scotland
Lyndsay Sutherland, UHI
Susan Ladilaw, THC
Alison McKenzie, COPFS

	➤ ACTION: Coordinate a multi-agency spiking campaign once Police materials are confirmed with input from other PP Committees. Confirm permanent GBV training agreement: Some delays due to staff illness and role cover. No barriers identified; progress expected by next meeting. ➤ ACTION: CR to liaise with CS to confirm the permanent GBV training agreement HVAWP Annual Report: The report has now been finalised but still needs to be more widely circulated (incl. councillors); Partners to supply email addresses if they would like CR to circulate with a covering letter from PM or they can share across networks if they so wish. PM took this opportunity to thank CR and EL for all their hard work for putting this report together along with the help of Medical Illustrations, he also asked if there were any comments – members had none. IDAA training coordination: KP reported this matter was ongoing and options were being looked at going forward. ✚ SafeLives unable to replicate previous tailored training model. ✚ January course cancelled due to low uptake, next course in September. ✚ Alternatives being explored across the delivery group. Coordinate activities in the welfare working group for festivals: DM reported the Belladrum meetings do not start until next month. Additional work planned to update the overall welfare provision documents for licensing to make sure all aspects are covered and proportionate and to ask organisers to do the same as it is about the wellbeing of people attending. ➤ ACTION: DM, MR, Andrew to meet in March to update overall welfare provision documents and report back to members on the updated welfare provision	CR CR/CS ALL DM,MR, Andrew
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	Update MARAC Operating Protocol and Sharing Agreement: KP reported the short life working group has taken over for the last couple of months, but the work is in progress. A continuation of support arrangements for the additional development work for KP to be agreed between CR/CS Share CPC audit findings: DM reported they were meeting in two weeks to finalise the findings. They should be in a position to share that information with members by the next meeting. Asylum seekers being rehoused in Cameron Barracks: PM attended an extraordinary COG meeting. There was no update from the Home Office. He reported he had received a letter from the Home Office stating no final decision had been made. The local authority and NHS Highland are monitoring the situation. ➤ ACTION: CR to circulate a copy of the letter received by the Minister for Asylum and Immigration regarding HVAWP concerns to members of the group for their perusal.	CR/CS DM CR
3.	KEY UPDATE – ORGANISATIONAL AND AREA CHANGE Fiona MacIntosh – Early Protective Messaging Project FM presented the Early Protective Messaging (EPM) project for early years practitioners. ✚ Designed for practitioners, not children directly. ✚ Aims to build early understanding of consent, boundaries, and safe relationships. ✚ Strong alignment with national child protection and RSHP frameworks. ✚ Pilot work and evaluation undertaken; rollout has begun. ✚ Discussion followed on GBV-related trauma support needs among early years staff. ➤ ACTION: Circulate Early Protective Messaging slides with the minutes of this meeting <u>but not for onward use or distribution</u>. ➤ ACTION: Discuss GBV elements for trainers and agree next steps by email if required.	CR CR/CS/FM

	➤ ACTION: Explore a demonstration session of EPM for HVAWP members, check with trainers and report back.	FM
4.	SPOTLIGHT – PARTNER ORGANISATION/SERVICE AREA <i>To provide an opportunity for everyone to learn about each other's organisations service, structures, delivery, key areas of accomplishment, connections to other areas, networks, current key priorities.</i> Lyndsay Sutherland from UHI has volunteered present at the next HVAWP meeting.	LS
5.	UPDATE ON HVAWP REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT DAY (Chair and Deputes) - For noting and raising questions PM summarised outcomes agreed at the Development Day held on the 27th January 2026. Everyone had reported it was a very well organised day, good venue with a great chance to meet and progress things face to face. Outcomes: ✚ Need for streamlined governance including finance overview. ✚ Action-focused delivery groups; less admin burden, share responsibility among all partners to use wide range of skills and knowledge. ✚ Proposed thematic areas: Justice, Health, Education, Voice to be explored further including names and remits though end proposal could be different. ✚ Need to ensure we adhere to ES requirements, Government requirements, local needs requirements and incorporate local and national plans ✚ Work across groups, committees, public protection forums etc ✚ Consistent terminology and stronger reporting. ✚ Strong tors for groups, clear chairing by senior managers, right people sitting in the groups. ✚ Acknowledgement of partner capacity constraints. ✚ Value of short-life working groups and more fluid meeting arrangement times ✚ Working group to design final structure by April 2026 – meetings arranged for 9th and 19th March. ✚ Training, awareness raising, data key themes throughout all areas.	

6.	UPDATE ON HVAWP MARAC SLWG AND DRAFT REPORT Members were in receipt of the report from the SLWG. KP presented findings from the Short Life Working Group: Findings: 40% rise in referrals since 2016/17; 70% rise in repeats since 2022/23. - Cases increasingly complex and resource-intensive. - Rotating chair model creating inconsistencies. - Need identified for additional admin resource and improved governance. Recommendations: - Increasing MARAC administrative capacity (to 2.2 FTE) - Reviewing multi-agency funding contributions - Stabilising and clarifying IDAA funding across Highland - Strengthening chairing arrangements - Introducing a new MARAC triage process to maintain focus on highest-risk cases - Reviewing temporary administrative arrangements Decision: - Partnership agreed to submit full report and recommendations to COG on 18 March 2026. ➤ ACTION: Take matter to COG meeting Comments: ✱ GL commented that the 40% increase in referrals demonstrates the good work that has been done from the partnership to raise awareness, educate and train practitioners about the complexities of domestic abuse and GBV particularly in respect of the “Spider in the Glass” material promoted by MR, as this is giving a greater understanding of the complexity and what to look for. He feels this has contributed to the 40% uplift, not in its entirety but certainly a significant contribution.	PM
7.	FINANCIAL - for noting and raising questions Financial reports were received by all members and CR went through the documents approved by the accountant. No questions arising.	

	A Finance Working Group will be reconvened to consider project bids and support longer-term sustainability planning as usual. Times for meetings will be early April to allow for budget setting for before the spring quarter meeting. ➤ ACTION: Circulate proforma previously used for project work for groups to submit requests for future project funding.	CR
8.	CURRENT KEY ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AND AGREE ANY ACTIONS a) Update on National Activities affecting Highlands (PM/CR) PM attended Scottish Chairs meeting on 3rd February, he gave a brief summary of the meeting: ✚ Lack of engagement from Scottish Government and COSLA regarding VAWG funding. ✚ Looking at applying for a seat on the National Public Protection Learning Group ✚ The leads are returning to Scottish Government and COSLA to give them another chance for response. ✚ Considering then contacting various political parties to make people aware of the issues in relation to the increase in domestic abuse, domestic GBV etc. ✚ Needs assessment discussed, there are 10 areas in Scotland that applied to be part of the needs assessment pilot stage in relation to national VAWP and the funding review. ✚ Learning papers come out in June 2026. ✚ DES funding has been confirmed for two years. CR went on to report on the following: ✚ Scotland is currently strengthening its response to honour-based abuse and forced marriage with the hope of focusing on better identification, training for specialist frontline staff and addressing gaps in multi-agency support, this work is ongoing. ✚ GREVIO (Independent expert body responsible for monitoring the council of Europe's convention which the is Istanbul Convention) have made their report to the UK and the Scottish Government will be putting together a working group to look at addressing the main concerns that were raised.	

	 MARAC funding withdrawal by the Highland Council during its DA Contracting process appeared to have generated confusion between IDAA and MARAC process funding lines. Historically HVAWP receive funding for the MARAC process of £20k from NHSH, THC and Police for the MARAC operation and staff. It was noted that the NHSH however now paid a significantly higher contribution to staff due to its contractual obligations and a significant further support in staffing to support the understaff operations structure. WA services received funding historically directly from the Highland Council to run the IDAA service since its incorporate into Highland. The two were separate funding streams.  A clear decision-making process is needed regarding IDAA training funding and delivery that requires partnership input as it's an integral part of MARAC which is a partnership process.  Jack Libby to confirm local authority internal workstreams and timelines on their funding arrangements of the IDAA services. It was confirmed that the contracts department are aware that the IDAA service was to be part of the new DA contract arrangements and emails confirming it was in the Pin are on record.  Impact summary to be prepared for COG (18 March). Women's Aid expressed that qualified IDAAs remain essential for safe MARAC participation and service delivery. ➤ ACTION: Refuge funding clarification and report back ➤ ACTION: Meeting to be set up between PM and WA groups before the COG meeting to create impact summary ➤ ACTION: Urgent clarification from THC is needed as to what funding is being paid for IDAA services after 31 March as previously this was paid for, and MARAC could operate without it within existing guidelines. ➤ ACTION: General support for the submission of the SLWG report to COG highlighting current risks to MARAC from the increasing rate of referrals with the urgent review of recommendations necessary.	JL PM/WA groups
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9.	DELIVERY GROUP UPDATES (not already mentioned previously) MARAC Delivery Group – Lorraine Revitt All matters regarding MARAC have been covered over numerous agenda items from the MARAC report. S&T Joint Project with CPC - Mike Mawby The papers were circulated to members before the meeting. CR gave a brief summary of S&T matters: ✚ Recent core programmes delivered in Inverness and Strathpeffer. ✚ Fort William session at risk of cancellation due to low uptake. ✚ DES funding extended for two years. ✚ Developing 2026/27 training programme. CR stated if there were any questions/queries members could contact her via email or contact MM direct. Training Update – all organisations to please provide figures for last quarter 1st Oct to 31st Dec ✚ Level 1 GBV training resumed following staff absence. ✚ Waiting list being processed. MR stated she had delivered “Spider in the Glass” to 11,500 people across Scotland last year, she is Interested in having conversations about doing more.	
10.	ORGANISATIONAL/SERVICE UPDATES This section is to allow all organisations and services areas to provide 1 key update – current issue, achievement, changes etc that is related to our GBV work in Highlands. Partners were invited to submit items for the COG report including: ✚ Training delivered ✚ Good-news stories ✚ Emerging risks No additional verbal updates were provided.	

11.	COG ITEMS Review of items for COG report a) Risks  Funding for frontline services remains a major risk which is already on the risk register held with COG.	
12.	HVAWP RISK REGISTER No changes to risk position beyond items already discussed.	
13.	AOB GL informed members he has a new post so this will be the last meeting he will attend. PM thanked him for all his contributions over the years and wished him well for the future.	
	Dates of 2026 Meetings: Tuesday 19 May, 10:00 -12:00 Monday 28 September, 13:00 - 15:00 Tuesday 17 November, 10:00 - 12:00	